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THEOSOPHY

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY

THE STUDY OF OCCULT SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

AND ARYAN LITERATURE

Vol. LXIII 1974-1975

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OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

I *To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;*

II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*

III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

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Works make for the cleansing of the heart; but not for the attaining of the Real; the gaining of the Real comes through discernment—not even by myriads of works is it gained.

—*Sankaracharya*

THEOSOPHY

VOLUME 63 NOVEMBER, 1974 NUMBER 1

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

As we begin our sixty-third volume—marking the grand climacteric of this Magazine—and also enter the annual term of publication which will reach far into 1975—it is natural to make brief notice of the portents during this eve of the cycle of quickening and expanding effort of the Theosophical Movement. A little more than a century ago, in the "Before the Veil" section which begins *Isis Unveiled,* H.P.B. spoke of the great contest between science and religion, pointing out that orthodoxy in religion had become a blot on the moral landscape, a defiance of reason, and a fraud on the higher longings of mankind. Meanwhile the materialism of science was eradicating belief in man's personal immortality, erasing any conception of deity, and justifying a life of mere animal existence for man. Spiritualism, she then said, "risen amid the tottering ruins of self-styled revealed religions and materialistic philosophies," alone may offer "a possible last refuge of compromise between the two." Later, in one of her articles, she was to call Spiritualism, in its psychic and mesmeric manifestations, the cyclic pioneer of the revival of "prehistoric Theosophy." Yet to be true Theosophy, it had to be purged of its misconceptions, and this was one of the tasks undertaken in *Isis Unveiled.* The waters of Spiritualism, as she said in "The Cycle Moveth," "were neither primordial nor pure."

Yet the impact of Spiritualistic phenomena on the mind of the West had a loosening and stirring effect. As H.P.B. put it, "The

enormous and ever-growing numbers of mystics at the present time show better than anything else the undeniably occult working of the cycle."

The parallels today, coming perhaps a little earlier, are many and unmistakable. Once again we have "a determined psychic rebellion" against the materialism and cold dogmatism of science, except that in this century, the front of the revolt has been broadened by the effects of close to a century of filtering into the modern consciousness of Theosophical ideas. True, these ideas have for the most part suffered extensive dilution; as remarked in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 622) concerning another sort of Theosophical influence: the truths inspired "were ever alloyed with their own speculations in one or another predetermined direction—hence distorted." Yet what H.P.B. says of the tide of change in ideas in the last century remains exactly applicable in the present: it now comes in its "pre-ordained and pre-appointed time of cyclic law," and will finally break through every artificial dam of conventional belief. Indeed, some of the strongholds of conventional belief are already honeycombed with exotic religious novelties.

In her analysis of this great change, H.P.B. stressed the factor of awakening more than the issue of precise philosophic truth. "Whether they placed belief in and followed 'Spiritualism' or not, many were those on whom the spiritual and psychic evolution of the cycle wrought an indelible impression; and such ex-materialists could never again return to their iconoclastic ideas." In the present, in addition to the inescapable sensationalism of the daily press and the popular magazines—both of which now give inordinate attention to things "occult" or "magical"—there are scores of books and articles eagerly reaching after "mystical" conceptions and reviewing exhaustively what is believed to be known of Eastern psychological disciplines. "Yoga" is a conversational commonplace, "meditation" a word to conjure with. Symbolism, meanwhile, has long since been restored to respectable inquiry, through the work of scholars such as Ernst Cassirer and psychologists of the stature of Carl Jung. For evidence that the "wave" is now upon us one has only to read a book like Jacob Needleman's *The New Religions* or Robert Ornstein's *The Psychology of Consciousness*. Quite obviously, the framework of orthodox assumption in both science and religion is rapidly giving way. We have little difficulty, now, in recognizing the prevision in H.P.B.'s remark in "Esoteric Character of the Gospels": "The twentieth century has strange

developments in store for humanity, and may even be the last of its name." And in the same article she said in a footnote that in the now widely heralded "Aquarian Age," the "psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change."

It may be well to notice that toward *some* of the "dilutions" of Theosophy in her own time, H.P.B. showed a friendly tolerance. When a London clergyman announced the formation of a Christo-Theosophical Society, while noting that this of necessity led to a restricted and limited program, confining the source of truth to but one (and the youngest) religion, and "*avatars* to but one man," she concluded:

> We feel too proud and too satisfied with the homage thus paid to Theosophy, and with the sight of a representative of the Anglican clergy following in our track, to find fault with details, or wish anything but good luck to the Christo-Theosophical Association.

In "The Signs of the Times," H.P.B. made a brief review of the popular literature of the day, beginning by saying: "The key-note for mystic and theosophic literature was Marion Crawford's 'Mr. Isaacs'." She then listed works by Marie Corelli, Robert Louis Stevenson, Anstey, Rider Haggard, and several others. However, when it comes to inversions rather than dilutions or popularizations, her criticisms are severe and uncompromising. Her condemnation of hypnotism was unambiguous in this article: "One of the keys of occultism is in the hands of science—cold, heartless, materialistic, and crassly ignorant of the other truly psychic side of the phenomenon; hence, powerless to draw a line of demarcation between the physiological and the purely spiritual effects of the disease inoculated, and unable to prevent future results and consequences of which it has no knowledge, and over which it has, therefore, no control." The final paragraph of this article, with some few minor alterations, could be taken as a treatise on the present, applying to a broad spectrum of psychic practices, of which only the more lurid and overtly criminal in tendency have had public attention:

> No wonder then that occult literature is growing with every day. Occultism and sorcery are in the air, with no true philosophical knowledge to guide the experimenters and thus check evil results. "Works of *fiction,*" the various novels and romances are called. "Fiction" in the arrangement of their characters and the adventures of their heroes and heroines—admitted. Not

> so, as to the *facts* presented. These are *no fictions,* but true *presentiments* of what lies in the bosom of the future, and much of which is already born—nay corroborated by *scientific* experiments. Sign of the times! Close of a psychic cycle! The time for phenomena with, or through mediums, whether professional or otherwise, is gone by. It was the early season of the blossoming, of the era mentioned even in the Bible ["It shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions." (Joel, 2, 28.)]; the tree of Occultism is now preparing for "fruiting," and the spirit of the Occult is awakening in the blood of the new generations. If the old men only "dream dreams," the young ones see already visions, and—record them in novels and works of fiction. Woe to the ignorant and the unprepared, and those who listen to the sirens of materialistic science! For indeed, indeed, many will be the unconscious crimes committeed, and many will be the victims who will innocently suffer death by hanging and decapitation at the hands of the righteous judges and the *too innocent* jurymen, both alike ignorant of the fiendish power of SUGGESTION.

Times, customs, and legal penalties have changed, but the broad implications of what is said here may be easily recognized. *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist* are but notorious and publicized examples of a kind of literature that, taken in its widely spreading influence, lead to "Manson families" and other excesses of irresponsible psychic emotion, with cruel abuse of pliable and passive victims. Meanwhile press reports of new religious cults—some Christian, some ostensibly of Eastern origin—include the practice of rigid thought control and emotional and financial exploitation—with confinement and beatings for errant members, showing that the uglier side of the psychic cycle is having its innings. Some groups spend most of their time "chanting," and the rational side of man's capacities is rejected with anger and contempt. The two poles of psychic decline—seen, on the one hand, in "the deliberate surrender of intellect and its imprisonment in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition," and, on the other, in unrestrained indulgence of "animal propensities"—are plainly in evidence, requiring no catalog of examples for anyone who looks at the daily papers or samples the electronic media.

Yet, at the same time, documentation of many positive and constructive tendencies of the sort so movingly described in "The Tidal Wave" would be comparatively easy to compile. "Lookout" has given attention to some of these encouraging expressions. A

particular example that may be noticed is the worldwide revival of interest in Buddhism, and the spread of Buddhist sects of nearly every sort. We may remember that, in giving attention to an article by Emile Burnouf—after declaring that Theosophy is not Buddhism, and that the Society has no "articles of faith" except its non-sectarian Objects—H.P.B. went on to say:

> In stating that the T.S. is "Buddhist," M. Burnouf is quite right, however, from one point of view. It has a Buddhist colouring simply because that religion, or rather philosophy, approaches more nearly to the TRUTH (the secret wisdom) than does any other exoteric form of belief. Hence the close connection between the two. But on the other hand the T.S. is perfectly right in protesting against being mistaken for a merely Buddhist propaganda, for the reasons given. . . . For although in complete agreement with him [M. Burnouf] as to the *true* nature and character of primitive Buddhism, yet the Buddhism of today is none the less a rather dogmatic religion, split into many and heterogeneous sects. We follow the Buddha alone. Therefore, once it becomes necessary to go behind the actually existing form, and who will deny this necessity in respect to Buddhism?—once this is done, is it not infinitely better to go back to the pure and unadulterated source of Buddhism itself, rather than halt at an intermediate stage?

Then, adding a comment on statements by Burnouf, she declared:

> It is true that no *mysteries* or esotericism exists in the two chief Buddhist Churches, the Southern and the Northern. Buddhists may well be content with the dead letter of Siddartha Buddha's teachings, as fortunately no higher or nobler ones in their effects upon the masses exist, to this day. But herein lies the great mistake of all the Orientalists. There *is* an esoteric doctrine, a soul-ennobling philosophy, behind the outward body of ecclesiastical Buddhism. The latter, pure, chaste and immaculate as the virgin snow on the ice-capped crests of the Himalayan ranges, is, however, as cold and desolate as they with regard to the *post-mortem* condition of man. This secret system was taught to the *Arhats* alone, generally in the Saptaparna (Mahavansa's *Sattapani*) cave. . . . It is from this cave . . . that the Arhats initiated into the Secret Wisdom carried away their learning and knowledge beyond the Himalayan range, wherein the Secret Doctrine is taught to this day.

We should note that the praise given here to even exoteric Buddhism cannot possibly apply to the Tantric schools, of which she writes extensively elsewhere (as for example in the articles "Tibetan Teachings" and "Reincarnations in Tibet"). Much of the

Buddhism now so popular in the West is Tantric in origin, probably because of the emphasis on personal development and in some cases the acquisition of "powers."

But what of the other, often intellectually impressive, schools and cults of "occultism," or of personal "integration," which are now attracting so much attention, especially among humanistic psychologists and a growing number of existential and other psychiatrists? What about the sudden interest in Gurdjieff, and in those whom he taught and influenced? This is a gray area difficult to assess, yet for those who share in the allegiance expressed by H.P.B. to the original teachings and mission of Siddartha Buddha, some words addressed to an accomplished intellectual of her time—A. P. Sinnett—concerning his desire to obtain proofs of "forces in Nature of which science knows nothing," to become able to demonstrate them to others, and also to penetrate the secrets of the Adepts, have the greatest relevance. Mr. Sinnett's Correspondent wrote:

> To our minds these motives sincere and worthy of every serious consideration *from the worldly standpoint,* appear *selfish.* . . . They are selfish, because you must be aware that the chief object of the Theosophical Society is *not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men.* . . . and in our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness, if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of a desire *for self-benefit, or a tendency to do injustice even there where these exist unconsciously to himself.* Yet, you have ever discussed, but to put down, the idea of a Universal Brotherhood, questioned its usefulness, and advised to remodel the Theosophical Society on the principle of a college for the special study of occultism. . . .

Then, in her conclusion of the article on Burnouf's opinions, she quoted from another letter from a most august source:

> Perish rather the Theosophical Society . . . than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic and a hall of Occultism. That we, the devoted followers of the spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy and divine kindness as of all the highest virtues attainable on the earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha, should ever allow the Theosophical Society to represent the embodiment of selfishness, to become the refuge of the few with no thought in them for the many, is a strange idea. . . . And it is we, the humble disciples of the perfect Lamas, who are expected to permit the Theosophical Society to drop its noblest

> title, that of the Brotherhood of Humanity, to become a simple school of Psychology. No! No! our brothers, you have been labouring under the mistake too long already. Let us understand each other. He who does not feel competent enough to grasp the noble idea sufficiently to work for it, need not undertake a task too heavy for him. . . .

These, through quotation, become also H.P.B.'s words, so that we have little difficulty in recognizing why the fashionable groups for the study of various brands of "Occultism" seldom if ever refer to Madame Blavatsky, or make more than passing reference to her works. She cannot be isolated from her devotion to the Great Orphan, Humanity, nor can her ways and teachings be understood save in consideration of the goal and object she declared first of all. The test of Theosophy, of the presence and influence of the Theosophical Movement, wherever truly found in the world, is given in many places in the literature, but nowhere more clearly expressed than in the closing words of H.P.B.'s article, "Our Cycle and the Next":

> If Theosophy, prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.
>
> But if not, then the storm will burst, and our boasted western civilization and enlightenment will sink in such a sea of horror that its parallel History has never yet recorded.

Well, there have been partial sinkings, and various horrors—some, perhaps, worse than any our historical recollection encompasses—yet the time is now approaching for another cycle of deepening inspiration, another arousal of the human spirit, and another great conjunction of pathways with high opportunities for far-reaching choice. These are the realities of the coming years, to which we may look for confirmation of philosophy, for identification of the moral energy of the cycle, for strengthening of resolve. So far as workers in the ranks are concerned, the Teacher

will speak most audibly and recognizably to the inner integrity and philosophic insight in each one. For the Teacher is one with the burgeoning spirit of the Age, its voice and its vision, and will be known and understood by no other means. What was said before will surely be said again, whatever the idiom or mode.

In perhaps her only major article addressed to the non-Theosophical world after 1875—printed that is, not in a Theosophical journal, but in the *North American Review* for August, 1890—H.P.B. gave this account of the Movement and its work:

> The theosophical movement was a necessity of the age, and it has spread under its own inherent impulsion, and owes nothing to adventitious methods. From the first it has had neither money, endowment, nor social or governmental patronage to count upon. It appealed to certain human instincts and aspirations, and held up a certain lofty ideal of perfectibility, with which the vested extraneous interests of society conflicted, and against which these were foredoomed to battle. Its strongest allies were the human yearnings for light on the problem of life, and for a nobler conception of the origin, destiny, and potentialities of the human being. While materialism and its congener, secularism, were bent on destroying not only theology and sectarian dogmatism, but even the religious conception of a diviner Self, theosophy has aimed at uniting all broad religious people for research into the actual basis of religion and scientific proofs of the existence and permanence of the higher Self. . . .
>
> We believe the human body to be but the shell, cover, or veil of the real entity; and those who accept the esoteric philosophy and the theory of "Karma" (the universal law of ethical causation) believe that the entity, as it travels around certain major and minor cycles of existence with the whole mass of human beings, takes on a different body at birth, and shells it off at death, under the operation of this Karmic law. Yet though it may thus clothe and reclothe itself a thousand times in a series of reincarnations, the entity is unchanged and unchangeable, being of a divine nature, superior to all environments on the earthly plane. It is the physical body only which has racial type, color, sex, hatreds, ambitions, and loves. So then, when we postulate the idea of universal brotherhood, we wish it understood that it is held in no Utopian sense, though we do not dream of realizing it at once on the ordinary plane of social or national relations. Most assuredly, if this view of the kinship of all mankind could gain universal acceptance, the improved sense of moral responsibility it would engender would cause most social evils and international asperities to disappear; for a true altruism, instead of the present egoism,

would be the rule the world over. So we have written down as the first of our declared objects this altruistic asseveration, and have been working practically to bring about a beginning of the better law. . . .

For many a long year the "great orphan," Humanity, has been crying aloud in the darkness for guidance and light. Amid the increasing splendors of a progress purely material, of a science that nourished the intellect, but left the spirit to starve, Humanity, dimly feeling its origin and presaging its destiny, has stretched out towards the East empty hands that only a *spiritual* philosophy can fill. Aching from the divisions, the jealousies, the hatreds, that rend its very life, it has cried for some sure foundation on which to build the solidarity it senses, some metaphysical basis from which its loftiest social ideals may rise secure. Only the Masters of the Eastern wisdom can set that foundation, can satisfy at once the intellect and the spirit, can guide Humanity safely through the night to "the dawn of a larger day."

Such is the goal which theosophy has set itself to attain; such is the history of the modern movement; such is the work which theosophy has already accomplished in this nineteenth century.

And such will be the goal and work of the future.

Polarizations of Religion

Theosophy, on earth, is like the white ray of the spectrum, and every religion only one of the seven prismatic colours. Ignoring all the others, and cursing them as false, every special coloured ray claims not only priority, but to be *that white ray itself,* and anathematizes even its own tints from light to dark, as heresies. Yet, as the sun of truth rises higher and higher on the horizon of man's perception, and each coloured ray gradually fades out until it is finally re-absorbed in its turn, humanity will at last be cursed no longer with artificial polarizations, but will find itself bathing in the pure colourless sunlight of eternal truth. And this will be *Theosophia.*

—H. P. Blavatsky

THREADS OF OCCULT SCIENCE

VI

[A lengthy report in a French Spiritualist journal on the physical phenomena of "stone showers," contributed by M. Riko, a Dutch correspondent of good education and wide repute, was reprinted by H.P.B. in the *Theosophist* and made the basis for extensive comment. A flight of stones from the sky—apparently not uncommon since a number of them are described in this report—is remarkable in itself, but of equal interest is the fact that the phenomenon often occurs in the pre sence of a "sensitive" human being, and that the stones do not strike anyone. In one such case, reported in Java, the stones fell at the rate of a thousand a day for a period of sixteen days, some of them weighing as much as nine pounds. H.P.B. addresses herself to the Spiritualist claim that such phenomena are caused by "spirits," giving the occult laws which apply in various instances. We may note that H.P.B. often used mysterious or puzzling events as the means for demonstrating the capacity of the occult philosophy to provide rational explanation—as is illustrated in the second reply by H.P.B. reprinted here, concerning William Underwood, an American who could "generate fire through the medium of his breath." A reader had requested the "esoteric point of view of such a phenomenon." (Sources by volume and page in the *Theosophist* are given in brackets.)]

MEANWHILE, M. Riko will perhaps permit us a word. The last sentence of his letter proves clearly that even he, a spiritist, is unable to trace such a uniformly senseless, idiotic phenomenon—one that periodically occurs in every part of the world and without the slightest cause for it, as without the least *moral* effect upon those present,—to the agency of disembodied *human spirits*. We well know that, while most of the spiritists will attribute it to the *Esprits nalins* (malicious disembodied spirits) the Roman Catholic world and most of the pious Protestants—at least those who may have convinced themselves of the facts—will lay it at the door of the *devil*. Now for argument's sake, and allowing the idea of such creatures as the "malicious human souls" of the spiritist and the "demons" of the Christian theology to exist elsewhere than in imagination, how can both these classes of believers account for the contradictions involved? Here are

beings which or who—whether devils, or malicious ex-human imps —are evidently wicked. Their object—if they have any at all—must be to derive cruel pleasure from tormenting mortals? They cannot be less bent upon mischief or more careful of possible results than ordinary mischievous school-boys. Yet we see the stones, or whatever the missiles may be, *carefully avoiding contact* with those present. They fall all around without "even grazing" the little Javanese girl—evidently *the medium* in the case observed by General Michiels. They fall thick among the ranks of the soldiers at "Fort Victoria"; and pass incessantly for several days before the very noses of the police agents at Paris and the Hague, without ever touching, let alone hurting, any one! What does this mean? *Malicious* human spirits, to say nothing of devils, would certainly have no such delicate care for those they were bent upon tormenting. What are they then, these invisible persecutors? Ordinary human "spirits"? In such a case human intelligence would be but a name; a word devoid of meaning as soon as it gets separated from its physical organs. It would become a blind force, a remnant of intellectual energy that was, and we would have to credit every liberated soul with insanity!

Having disposed of the theory of "spirits," "imps" and "devils" on the score of the idiocy and total absence of malevolence in the proceedings, once that the genuineness of the phenomenon is proved, to what else can it be attributed in its *causation* or origin, but to a *blind* though living force; one subjected to an intransgressible law of attraction and repulsion—in its course and *effects* —a law which exact science has yet to discover; for it is one of innumerable correlations due to magnetic conditions which are supplied only when both animal and terrestrial magnetism are present; meanwhile the former has to fight its way step by step for recognition, for science *will not* recognize it in its *psychological* effects,—do what its advocates may. The Spiritualists regard the phenomena of the stone-showers as irregular. We, Theosophists, answer that although their occurrence at a given place may appear to be very irregular, yet from a comparison of those in all parts of the world it might be found, if carefully recorded, that hitherto they have been uniform or nearly so. Perhaps they may be aptly compared with the terrestrial magnetic perturbations called by Science "fitful," and distinctly separated by her, at one time, from that other class she named "periodical"; the "fitful" now being found to recur at as regular periods as the former. The cause of

these variations of the magnetic needle is as entirely unknown to physical science as are the phenomena of stoneshowers to those who study psychological Science; yet both are closely connected. If we are asked what we mean by the comparison—and indignant may be the question on the part of both, Science and Spiritualism—we will humbly answer that such is the teaching of *Occult* Science. Both classes of our opponents have yet much to learn, and the Spiritualists—to first *unlearn* much in addition. Did our friends the believers in "spirits" ever go to the trouble of first studying "mediumship" and only then turning their attention to the phenomena occurring through the sensitives? We, at least, never heard that such is the case, not even during the most scientific investigation of mediumistic powers that ever took place—Professor Hare's and Mr. Crookes' experiments. And yet, had they done so, they might have found how closely related to and dependent on the variation of terrestrial magnetism are those of the mediumistic or animal magnetic state. Whenever a true medium fails to get phenomena it is immediately attributed by the Spiritualists, and oftener by the "Spirits" themselves to "unfavorable conditions." The latter are lumped together in a single phrase; but never did we hear the real scientific and chief cause for it given; the unfavorable variations of the terrestrial magnetism. The lack of harmony in the "circle" of investigators; various and conflicting magnetisms of the "sitters" are all of secondary importance. The power of a real, strongly *charged* medium[1] will always prevail against the animal magnetism which may be adverse to it; but it cannot produce effects unless it received a fresh supply of molecular force, an impress from the invisible body of those we call blind "Elementals" or Forces of Nature, and which the Spiritualists in every case regard as the "spirits of the dead." Showers of stones have been known to take place where there was not a living soul—

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[1] We hold that a "physical medium," so called, is but an organism more sensitive than most others to the terrestrial electro-magnetic induction. That the powers of a medium for the production of phenomena fluctuate from one hour to another is a fact proven by Mr. Crookes' experiments and, believing though we do in the existence of innumerable other so-called Spiritual Forces besides and quite independent of human spirits, we yet firmly maintain that *physical* mediums have very little, if anything, to do with the latter. Their powers are purely physical and conditional; *i.e.*, these powers depend almost entirely on the degree of receptivity, and chance polarization of the body of the medium by the electro-magnetic and atmospheric currents. Purely psychological manifestations are quite a different thing.

consequently no medium. The medium charged by the atmospheric legion of "correlations" (we prefer calling them by the new scientific term) will attract stones within the periphery of his force, but will at the same time repel them, the polaric condition of his body preventing the missiles from touching it. And its own molecular condition will temporarily induct with its properties all the other human and even non-sensitive bodies around it. Sometimes there may be an exception to the rule produced by some chance condition.

This explanatory postscript may be closed with the remark to M. Riko that we do not regard the Elementals of the Kabalists as properly "beings." They are the active Forces and correlations of Fire, Water, Earth, and Air, and their shape is like the hues of the chameleon which has no permanent colour of its own. Through the interplanetary and interstellar spaces, the vision of almost every *clairvoyant* can reach. But it is only the trained eye of the proficient in Eastern Occultism, that can fix the flitting shadows and give them a shape and a name. [II, 232-33.]

The exhalation of fire from the mouth is one of the stock illusions of the itinerant jugglers of various countries. In their case the dried powder of *Lycopadium* is employed, we believe, and the same substance is used in theatrical performances when it is desired to simulate either fire or lightning flashes. It may be that the American human volcano in question employs some such agent to impose upon his spectators, and we are always bound to exhaust the theories of the possible before venturing upon those of the seemingly impossible. Yet, personal character being a prime factor always, we must take it for granted that Mr. Underwood is above such trickery, since his phenomenon has such respectable endorsement. If then, we turn to occult science to seek for an explanation, we will find that there are cases of record of individuals who emit from their persons a luminous vapour or aura, under high states of nervous exaltation. Sometimes it appears as a wild radiance, sometimes as a lambent flame, and in others as an electric or rather odic corruscation. Rarely it is observed by day, but most frequently by night, and still oftener while the subject is deeply engaged in his devotions. A noted example is that of the fasting Peter of Alcantara, a Catholic devotee. The halo, or nimbus which painters depict about the heads and bodies of saints, yogis, gods

and goddesses, is familiar to every one, and is a memento of this natural phenomenon. But the light in these instances is of an odic character, and though flaming and flickering like fire, has none of its combustive property. Writers upon sorcery and mediumship have frequently recorded anecdotes of the bursting forth of flames from the doors, windows, chimneys or roofs of buildings without apparent cause, and in fact at times when there was no fire in any part of the house, nor any articles stored within, such as cotton, cotton-waste, greased rags, or other substances liable to spontaneous combustion. These mysterious burnings have been sometimes attended with stone-showers or throwings, equally unaccountable. The Spiritualists affirm that the agents in all these cases have been spirits; but unless they be fire-elementals or Salamanders of the Rosicrucians, they must be queer "Spirits." Among modern Western mediums, equally with Hindus of the same class, are many who can handle burning coals, red-hot iron, and molten metal with perfect impunity, and walk through beds of blazing fire unscathed. In America there is a female medium named Mrs. Swydam, who has this gift, and in Europe a late, and the most noted of male mediums, has not only exhibited the feat of handling hot coals without receiving harm, but even laid them upon the heads of non-mediums in the company present or upon newspapers or books, without injury to person or property. The explanation in both classes of cases is that the fire-proof individual is a medium for these fire elementals, and contains in himself an unusual proportion of Salamandrine properties, the result of an abnormal combination of elemental forces in his foetal development. Normally, a human being contains the elementals of all the four kingdoms in almost equal proportions, any slight preponderance of one or the other determining the so-called "temperament." [IV, 280.]

letters • questions • comment

What is universal Mind? The words bespeak a homogeneity in manifestation that is certainly not apparent in the endless diversity of elements we consider to be the mind, especially the human mind.

This question, which seeks definition of "Universal Mind," requires us to go to the texts where we find such recondite conceptions considered rigorously. It is important, for example, to recall that in *Transactions* (pp. 21-22) H.P.B. declares Universal Mind to be "only another name for the Absolute, *out of time and space,*" while "Cosmic Mind is Mahat, or divine ideation in active (creative) operation, and thus only the periodical manifestation in time and *in actu* of the Eternal Universal Mind—*in potentia.*" Orderly use of such terms must be desirable, or H.P.B. would not have provided such precise metaphysical distinctions throughout *The Secret Doctrine*. In the first Stanza (Sloka 3) is the statement: "UNIVERSAL MIND WAS NOT, FOR THERE WERE NO AH-HI TO CONTAIN IT." The import of the verb *to be* is here rejected in relation to Universal Mind before manifestation: One sees why H.P.B. used instead the term "Be-ness" as a clue for our understanding. As she said in *Transactions* (19):

> Everything outside of the Absolute and immutable Sat (Be-ness), is necessarily finite and conditioned, since it has beginning and end. Therefore, since the "Ah-hi were not," there was no Universal Mind as a manifestation. A distinction has to be made between the Absolute Mind, which is ever present, and its reflection and manifestation in the Ah-hi, who, being on the highest plane, reflect the universal mind collectively at the first flutter of Manvantara. After which they begin the work of evolution of all the lower forces throughout the seven planes, down to the lowest—our own.

Later (p. 23) she says:

> The "Ah-hi" pass through all the planes, beginning to manifest on the third. Like all other Hierarchies, on the highest plane they are *arupa, i.e.*, formless, bodiless, without any substance, mere breaths. On the second plane, they first approach to Rupa, or form. On the third, they become Manasa-putras,

those who become incarnated in man. With every plane they reach they are called by different names—there is a continual differentiation of their original homogeneous substance; we call it substance, although in reality it is no substance of which we can conceive.

The difficulties spoken of by the questioner seem well accounted for in these quotations. They are further explained in psychological terms in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 58-59):

> The first and Fundamental dogma of Occultism is Universal Unity (or Homogeneity) under three aspects. This led to a possible conception of Deity which as an absolute unity must remain forever incomprehensible to finite intellects. "If thou wouldst believe in the Power which acts within the root of a plant, or imagine the root concealed under the soil, thou hast to think of its stalk or trunk and of its leaves and flowers. Thou canst not imagine that Power independently of these objects. Life can be known only by the Tree of Life. . . ." (Precepts for Yoga). The idea of *Absolute* Unity would be broken entirely in our conception, had we not something concrete before our eyes to contain that Unity. And the deity being absolute, must be omnipresent, hence not an atom but contains IT within itself. The roots, the trunk, and its many branches are three distinct objects, yet they are one tree.

Indeed, as the questioner says, their homogeneity is "not apparent," and it is the task of philosophy to find the unity in diversity. The mind, in which both unity and diversity have *conscious* presence, is the tool, the place, and the energy of this reconciliation.

A *dynamic* conception of "universal mind," as recognized in its manifested aspect, is elsewhere provided by H.P.B.:

> Pythagoras taught his disciples that God is the universal *mind* diffused through all things, and that this mind by the sole virtue of its universal sameness could be communicated from one object to another and be made to create all things by the sole will-power of man. . . . Given a certain intensity of will, and the shapes created by the mind become subjective. Hallucinations, they are called, although to their creator they are as real as any visible object is to any one else. Given a more intense and intelligent concentration of this will, and the form becomes concrete, visible, objective; the man has learned the secret of secrets: he is a MAGICIAN. (*Isis Unveiled* I, 131, 62.)

Homogeneity in manifestation does not mean sameness in the sense of consubstantiality of material, but that an all-pervasive unity exists at a level where differences can be recognized as modifi-

cations resulting from ideation. The *power* to perceive is easily seen to be universal, even though the perceptions or the organs of perception are diverse. The "I" by which every man identifies that conscious power of awareness in himself is the same in all, even though each one is an independent center of consciousness.

A *Glossary* definition suggests the pervasiveness of mind everywhere in nature:

> MAHAT . . . The first principle of Universal Intelligence and Consciousness. In the Puranic philosophy the first product of root-nature or *Pradhana* (the same as Mulaprakriti); the producer of *Manas* the thinking principle, and of *Ahankara,* egotism or the feeling of "I am I" (in the lower Manas).

It may be inferred that the human mind (potentially) has access to all grades of intelligence that exist in the lower kingdoms of nature, and is much more besides. Lower Manas, as a reflection of higher Mind, has the faculty of cognizing itself, making possible self-conscious choice whether to interpret the ranges of experience in terms of a synthesizing view or as a collection of separate events. In "Kosmic Mind" H.P.B. indicates that the archaic religions of India, however overgrown with superstition, share with the ancient Greeks and Latins numerous allegories and myths showing universal intelligence assuming progressively more concrete forms throughout nature:

> . . . Every atom of matter in the four (or five) Elements is an emanation from an inferior God or Goddess, himself or herself an earlier emanation from a superior deity; and, moreover, that each of these atoms—being Brahmâ, one of whose names is *Anu,* or atom—no sooner is it emanated than it *becomes endowed with consciousness,* each of its kind, and free-will, acting within the limits of law. Now, he who knows that the *kosmic trimurti* (trinity) composed of Brahmâ, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Siva, the Destroyer, is a most magnificent and scientific symbol of the *material* Universe and its gradual evolution; and who finds a proof of this, in the etymology of the names of these deities, *plus* the doctrines of *Gupta Vidya,* or esoteric knowledge—knows also how to correctly understand this "superstition."

At the level of daily human intercourse, where diversity and difference are most evident and pressing, the implications of this universality may be crucial. Involved is the capacity of the mind to transcend its familiar limits. In his article "Daily Psychology," William Q. Judge suggests that this may be done by learning how our own mind functions, in this way ceasing to be an unconscious slave to its habits. He explains:

When we have become acquainted with this mental path of ours, we are then in position to see whether in any particular case our view is false.

This is the psychological and metaphysical equivalent of that scientific process which classifies and compares so as to arrive at distinguishing differences in things in order that physical laws may be discovered. For while we remain in ignorance of the method and path of our mind's action, there is no way in which we can compare with other minds. We can compare views and opinions, but not the actual mechanics of the thought. We can hear doctrines, but are unable to say whether we accept or reject from right reasoning or because our peculiar slant on the mental plane compels us to ratiocinate wholly in accordance with a mental obliquity acquired by many years of hurried life.

The value of thus understanding our own mental bias so that we can give it up at will and enter into the bias of another's mind is seen when we consider that each of us is able to perceive but one of the many sides which truth presents. If we remain in the rut which is natural, we pass through an entire life viewing nature and the field of thought through but one sort of instrument. But by the other practice we may obtain as many different views of truth as the number of the minds we meet. When another human being brings his thoughts before us, we may not only examine them in our way, but also take his method and, adopting his bias for the time as our own, see just that much more.

THE HIGHER PERCEPTION

As physical man, limited and trammelled from every side by illusions, cannot reach truth by the light of his terrestrial perceptions, we say—develop in you the *inner* knowledge. From the time when the Delphic oracle said to the enquirer "Man, know thyself," no greater or more important truth was ever taught. Without such perception, man will remain ever blind to even many a relative, let alone absolute, truth.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

EVERYDAY OCCULTISM

WHY is the *Bhagavad-Gita* so named? Why is it (in the original) spoken in poetic measure? And why is it cast in the form of dialogue?

Surely these are not trivial questions if we esteem it to be a poem of surpassing value, by whomsoever first submitted to public judgment. Instinctively, in the animals, and intuitively among men, it is natural to try to determine for one's self the Why of everything. It is natural because it is universal. Every contact in nature calls for response of some kind—for response in kind, or its opposite. This, then, in the symbolical sense, is Language, is Nature's universal speech—action, or Karma, and it is always in the form of dialogue, whether the communication is initiated by us or by the other forms of Life. This contact or speech may be intended to do us a service or a disservice. We must determine which for ourselves, and so we ask, Why? In a later Chapter of the *Gita,* the Fourth, Krishna tells Arjuna to "seek this Wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility."

Everything we do is done to render service, to ourself, or to others, or to both. The quest of the Soul is service, in one form or another. And whether it is our own actions, or our response to the actions of that other, we question and he questions, Is this service which is proposed to be rendered, or is it disservice? If it *is* service, we are grateful, *i.e.*, filled with "humility"—and so is he. All these four modes of gaining Wisdom are but concurrent and concomitant uses of one mode. When this natural process is consciously recognized we, too, become "four-armed" like Krishna. In a personal sense, then, every man incessantly pursues these "four modes of Truth," as named by Buddha, who was Wisdom Incarnate, which is what we are striving to become, and what every Being in all Nature is striving to become, consciously to itself or unconsciously.

This is the Dialogue, or Duality, of all Life, and it becomes either a song or a discord in each Being according as his communications are "yea, yea, and nay, nay"—that is, "this is doing service;

NOTE.—This article begins a selection from a series of essays on *The Bhagavad-Gita* first printed in volume 15 of THEOSOPHY.

this is not doing service." So simply may be resolved all the endless discussions and contentions as to what is Love or Charity, and what is not, in all our relations with our fellow beings. There can be no genuine service which does not include both sides of the question—our interests, yes; and the best interests of the other side or party to the Transaction as well. This is the Brotherhood *in actu* which was the First Object of the Parent theosophical society because it is the one and only Object of H.P.B. and her Masters. It is that Object which every genuine theosophical student must ceaselessly strive to embody in himself, for Service *is* Wisdom in Action, or Speech—that "Spiritual Knowledge in which every action without exception is comprehended," because *understood.*

"Life itself," says the *Light on the Path,* "has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry: it is a song"—because each Being, however blindly, is doing service according to its perceptions of Life and Duty. Duryodhana and his cohorts, not less than Arjuna and his ranks, or Krishna himself—all were doing service, each according to his lights. But the setting of the poem shows that for all except Krishna their respective "service" had only embroiled them, one with another, as the world is a battlefield today, and as each student is a house divided against himself. What were their "lights?" Those cast by the religion, the science, the education, the governmental and social relations of the time. Is it any different today?

Duryodhana knew that his lights were "insufficient"—because Krishna was—*to him*—"on the other side." He knew that Arjuna's lights were "sufficient"—because he knew that Krishna was on Arjuna's side. But it did not seem to Arjuna that his "forces" were sufficient, albeit he was in more or less conscious communication or speech with Krishna. All had the same great Object, the possession undisputedly of the field. Duryodhana wanted possession for himself alone—that was his object, his idea of service which impelled him to fight even with losing odds. Arjuna wanted possession of the same field, but his Object, his idea of service, was higher. He wanted possession for the good of all, but he wanted it without a fight, so his Object became a mere objection—how can one be "doing service" in engaging in a battle to the death, with no quarter on either side? Searching for himself in his own mind, Arjuna found as many "good reasons" for *not* fighting as Duryodhana had for waging a losing battle. So he asked Krishna to resolve his doubts for him—doubts which Krishna knew could not be so

resolved in any other way than by Arjuna's fighting his own battle.

Bhagavad-Gita is translated "the Lord's Song" but it means universally "the Song of Life itself"—Karma. Sound, or vibration, is the universal motion of all Life, and is by each converted into terms of harmony or discord. But whether we call it noise or music, it is still sound. When Nature's rhythm moves in tune with our desires we call it song. But whoever or whatever disturbs the measure of our repose, our intervals of silence or search or asking questions or humility, throws us into the discord of doubt and uncertainty as surely as that which opposes or upsets our doing what we want to do, our "service."

No more than did Duryodhana and Arjuna, do we in our playing of the song of life ask ourselves whether it may not be that we are out of tune with the life around as well as in us. It is always the other one who makes the discord, who is on the wrong side. We are always in the right, whether we eat meat or are vegetarians. It was Saint Paul—a Krishna of later days—not those to whom he spoke, who said, "If meat maketh my brother to offend I will not eat meat." The right and wrong, according to him, was not in meat or vegetables, nor in diet, but in "making to offend." Arjuna believed in reincarnation and in Karma and in brotherhood, as do we, but we no more than he perceive that wherever and whenever we are in pitched battle with circumstances it is not the circumstances which make strident the music of the spheres of action by the roar of battle. Circumstances, whatever they are, are but the echoing past once more made reverberant by our present attitude and action. Paul said, again, "When I was a child I spake as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things." For the child, what is noise to his elders *is* music to him—music, as we all know, which the child insists on sharing with the elders by forcing it upon their ears. Well, we may love the *child* enough to tolerate his clamors, to humor them, even to see in them the means of his *education,* which is to say, of leading out his innate power of making sounds till the sounds have better meanings to the child. Thus all human speech and music are acquired by transmission from the elder to the younger brothers of the race. The first meaning of song or speech, and the last, is harmony, and how can there be harmony of Soul so long as there is friction between ourself and another, friction between one portion of our nature and the rest?

If Duryodhana and his host represent the lower portion of our nature and great Nature, a portion which we have long since outgrown, so that what is music to it is discordant to us, we do well to remember that this lower Self is none the less in evolution too, and is still growing, its means of growth the education which it derives from us. We will regard it as we regard a child, not so much as "lower" and its speech or natural action as "noisy," but rather as the Self, and set about our own service, its training and discipline. We may remember, too, that we were once a child, and that to "put away childish things" does not mean to be "childless"—to live for ourselves alone—or to regard those of lesser stature than our own as "inferior," or those of more progressed as our "superior," but rather to serve as elder brothers to the one, and as younger brothers to the other—but all alike Brothers, of whatever varying ages in evolution, because all "is soul and spirit, ever evolving under the rule of law inherent in the whole." This was Krishna's position, and it may be made ours, as it was by Arjuna made his—as the Eighteenth Chapter shows.

With the Duryodhana in us, the power of speech is limited to two notes, Yea and Nay of all Nature: Shall I fight or run away? Shall I eat or be eaten? Do I want this, or do I fear it? This is the Voice of Desire and Aversion, the positive and negative poles of Action, the line of direction or choice precipitated in "unconscious" Nature, whether we call it by the name of forces or Elementals, chemical elements or compounds, inorganic matter, or vegetable and animal life. Cohesion and dispersion, attraction or repulsion at every contact, to the object offering it is the Law of Life, inducing the "moment of choice" which determines the line of action taken, whether the forces employed in the predetermined action are "sufficient" or "insufficient." It is the ruling principle in all Nature below man's estate in evolution. It governs the natural action of our bodies, our senses, our sensations, and our minds. The Voice of this principle in our "inferior nature" (Seventh Chapter) is the means of education, or evolution, of the whole of Nature up to Man; in Man, it becomes one of the "Three Witnesses to Karma," and it is the testimony of this witness that we chiefly listen to, as did Arjuna. The Dialogue which we incessantly carry on internally is with this "animal man," or "astral man," who is but a portion, the "lower" portion, of our own nature, which we have, in fact, outgrown, and should be educating, not pampering.

Because Man is further along in evolution than the Beings below, who constitute in him his "principles," not his *being,* it is possible to every man to invoke, as Arjuna did, a higher light than *Daiviprakriti,* the light of Life diffused through all the divisions of the "inferior nature." He can call upon Krishna, the "Higher Self," because every man is in immediate contact day and night, sleeping or waking, with the Higher Self, as the Lower Self is in contact with him. It is for man to make that contact as conscious, by service to the Higher Self, as he is vividly conscious, by the same means, of his contact with the Lower Self. Arjuna, it would appear, invoked Krishna only when he was *in trouble*—as do we. Having served the Lower Self only too well and faithfully, as parents spoil children, and being now confronted by the rebellions and usurpations of those "children," his principles, he calls on Krishna, the only truthful witness, therefore sometimes named the *"One* Witness." At first, notice, he does not ask Krishna "what am I to do?" Oh, no. At first he tells Krishna what to do!—"I pray thee, Krishna, cause my chariot to be placed between the two armies, that I may behold." It is only after he has beheld, and in the vision been "filled with despondency," and tried unavailingly to "unload his troubles" on Krishna, that the real Dialogue begins, in Arjuna or any other man.

The Poles of Thought

Philosophy is the account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world. Two cardinal facts lie forever at the base; the one, and the two.—1. Unity, or Identity; and 2. Variety. We unite all things by perceiving the law which pervades them; by perceiving the superficial differences and the profound resemblances. But every mental act,—this very perception of identity or oneness, recognizes the difference of things. Oneness and otherness. It is impossible to speak or to think without embracing both.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

on the lookout

A Question of Ripeness

In *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 298), H.P.B. quoted from H. T. Buckle's *History of Civilization*: "If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time until the minds of men are ripe for its reception." Commenting, H.P.B. wrote: "This is Cyclic law, but this law itself is often defied by human stubbornness." Elsewhere (in "The Cycle Moveth") she observed that in the eighteenth century "the chronic disease called Scepticism and the denial of all but matter" led to the rejection of the teachings of messengers such as St. Germain and Cagliostro, and in her discussion of Buckle's statement of cyclic law she added: "It is barely possible that the minds of the present generations are not quite ripe for the reception of Occult truths."

Initiates in Every Age

In her own work, she pointed to the neglected realities behind the teachings of ignored occultists of the past, making extensive use, for example, of the doctrines of Anton Mesmer in *Isis Unveiled* and in other books and articles. It seems evident that Mesmer's conceptions and demonstrations of "Animal Magnetism" became, for her, a means of elaborating the working of the middle, psychic principles in the sevenfold man. This was in large part her method, as she explains in the "Introductory," saying that "The Initiates of 1888 would indeed remain incomprehensible and ever a seemingly impossible myth, were not like Initiates shown to have lived in every other age of history." She continued:

> This could be done only by naming Chapter and Verse where may be found mention of these great characters, who were preceded and followed by a long and interminable line of other famous Antediluvian and Postdiluvian Masters in the arts. Thus only could be shown, on semi-traditional and semi-historical authority, that knowledge of the Occult and the powers it confers on man, are not altogether fictions, but that they are as old as the world itself. (*S.D.* I, xlv.)

Gradual Awakenings

This theme was first announced in her Preface to *Isis Unveiled*—"Man-spirit proves God-spirit, as one drop of water proves a source from which it must have come." Her aim was to win acceptance for a philosophy which "has room for no other faith than an absolute and immovable faith in the omnipotence of man's immortal self." Later, in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 326-27), she described the law of intellectual evolution through which the mind of the race moves, step by step, in the direction of this realization, and elsewhere she suggested the ways in which workers behind the scenes of history provide help and stimulus to the psycho-moral evolution of the race (*S.D.* I, 558, 612, 620, 622). It must have been by a knowledge of these processes, in connection with cyclic possibility, that she was able to declare that "in the twentieth century of our era scholars will begin to recognize that the *Secret Doctrine* has neither been invented nor exaggerated, but, on the contrary, simply outlined; and finally, that its teachings antedate the Vedas." In a footnote to this statement she added:

> This is no pretension to *prophecy*, but simply a statement based on the knowledge of facts. Every century an attempt is being made to show the world that Occultism is no vain superstition. Once the door permitted to be kept a little ajar, it will be opened wider with every new century. The times are ripe for a more serious knowledge than hitherto permitted, though still very limited, so far. (I, xxxvii.)

Sign of the Times

Given the diverse means and avenues of this progress—some of which are intimated in "The Cycle Moveth"—it may be expected that each centenary impartation of the Wisdom-Religion will filter gradually into the mind of the race, and that although suffering dilution and distortion, its influence will still raise the level of human understanding to the degree permitted and made possible by cyclic law. H.P.B. constructed her presentation on the foundation of such past progress, relating her teachings, when advantageous to human understanding, to the ideas abroad in the world—at the same time illuminating and lifting those conceptions to a higher level. During the past ten years or so, numerous signs of the broad filtering effects of the nineteenth-century effort by H.P.B. have become manifest. More often than not, this evidence emerges in "speculations in one or another predetermined direction—hence distorted." Yet the influence is plain, and the

consequent openings in the mind of the race may be seen on every hand. Consider, for example, this brief assertion in a contemporary scholarly work, *The Psychology of Consciousness* by Robert Ornstein (Freeman and Viking, 1972):

> For western students of psychology and science, it is time to begin a new synthesis, to "translate" some of the concepts and ideas of the traditional psychologies into modern psychological terms, to regain a balance lost. To do this, we must first extend the boundaries of inquiry of modern science, *extend our concept of what is possible for man.*

Changing Assumptions

The value of Prof. Ornstein's book is in its symmetrical showing of the extent to which the "new" psychologists have become hospitable to what were once regarded as wholly unacceptable "mystical" or "metaphysical" ideas. A great change has come over this profession. This does not mean that psychologists are about to embrace "Theosophy," but only that there is now a recognition of various possibilities and realities that hardly any academic or professional person would acknowledge in years past. Prof. Ornstein's book is a good one to read for understanding the changed level of psychological inquiry in the present and for the future. It has chapters on the time-sense in man and on the psychological disciplines of the Sufis, Vedantins, and Buddhists. The avowed intention of the author is to reconcile and blend what he terms traditional "esoteric psychologies," mainly of the East, with Western psychology. The book has its insights, which may be identified as new concepts of "reality" in consequence of a century of intellectual growth in the Western world. A fresh plateau of psychological inquiry is announced and somewhat defined, fortunately with soberness and careful intellectual discipline.

"Development" not Altruism

Missing, however, is any reference to H. P. Blavatsky, of whom the writer cannot help but have been aware. Why this neglect in what is ostensibly an impartial study of the advance in man's self-knowledge—an advance which in fact H.P.B. made possible and stirred to practical beginnings? The answer to this question is not far to seek. Missing, too, is the primary quality of H.P.B.'s work and mission—the spirit of altruism, the will and intention to bring illumination to the suffering and the ignorant, to the oppressed and victimized of mankind. There is much intellectual elegance and

refined subtlety in Mr. Ornstein's book, but no flow of warmth and human concern, no reference to the sublime ethical quality of Buddha's teaching, or to the self-sacrificial resolve of Kwan Yin. And in the discussion of Yoga, his emphasis is mainly on the feats of physiological control achieved by modern practitioners—one man can raise the temperature in one of his hands while lowering it in the other!

A Kind of Progress

Yet the book, despite a confusion between the functions of *Buddhi* and *Manas,* is not without merit, so long as it be read as a carefully compiled account of the recent developments in modern thought—as a sort of map of the psychological and intellectual preparations which have already taken place in a substantial and growing sector of the race-mind. For all his liberated spirit and willingness to quest among the sects of Eastern mysticism and yoga practice, the author still writes from a somewhat augmented stance of Western science. In a chapter on the Techniques of Self-Regulation, he gives considerable space to modern biofeedback devices, saying that this approach "combines a traditional knowledge of the possibilities of human self-mastery and the most sophisticated tools of modern science and technology." By such means, he says, "the personal capacities of many in this culture" may be extended "in a readily assimilable way." Quite evidently, such a book reveals what trained minds shaped by the age of science and technology may absorb in terms of the great wave of influence released in the world of a century ago, with ample evidence of the limitations involved, as well as of opportunities for further awakening.

Living History

In some notes praising F. O. Matthiessen's just published *American Renaissance,* George H. Douglas draws on Emerson to explain his high opinion of Matthiessen's study of the masterpieces of certain nineteenth-century writers:

> Emerson once observed that "the use of history is to give value to the present hour," which is to say that the only great historical writing is that which answers to some compelling present need. A man must be open to life as it is currently going on if he is to have anything important to say about the past. This idea, which Emerson imbibed in his encounters with German romantics like Goethe and Herder, was well expressed at

> the beginning of the 20th century by Benedetto Croce, who said that all real history is contemporary history. The only way that the past can be resurrected is by people who have some contemporary use for it, who can fuse it with their own most intimate projects and needs. History never comes alive when it is merely studied and analyzed. It has to be lived again. (*Nation,* July 6.)

Knowing the Doctrine

This is sage comment. One thinks of the vast "history" which is encompassed by *The Secret Doctrine*—first of the cosmos and the world, then of the human race—all having for its purpose the enlargement of mankind's present self-understanding. In fact, one might say, as Mr. Judge suggests in "Universal Applications of Doctrine," that the true illumination of the past, gained from her book, does not "come alive" until it begins to exert a transforming influence on individual and social life. To "live again" the history presented by *The Secret Doctrine* would be to gain a realizing sense of our high ancestry as spiritual beings.

Cyclic Return?

An exceptionally good example of the heightened consciousness of the times may be recognized in Owen Barfield's musing essay on Theodore Roszak's *Where the Wasteland Ends,* in the Spring 1974 University of Denver *Quarterly*. Noting that the theme of this book is the restoration of "intercommunion between man and nature," he proceeds to a historical analysis of how both feeling and thought based upon this intercommunion were eliminated from Western culture, showing that the Cartesian separation of man's conscious identity from the natural world is now the well-established assumption of very nearly all the "orthodoxies" of the age, whether scientific or religious. Mr. Barfield writes to point out that the return to intercommunion with nature—which he regards as necessary and inevitable, and already under way—will almost certainly produce great disturbance in both intellectual and emotional terms. His article, therefore, is titled "The Coming Trauma of Materialism."

Pervasive Alienation

Exploring the far-reaching effects that must be anticipated in any such return, Mr. Barfield first notes that virtually all current scientific theory is based upon either explicit or tacit materialistic assumptions—and by materialism he means "the mental habit

of taking for granted . . . that the human psyche *is* intrinsically 'alienated' from nature . . . a habit so inveterate as to have entered into the meanings of a great many common words and thus to have become accepted as common sense itself." We may note in passing that this sort of realization and exposure of unjustified and often unexamined assumptions is the first and crucial step toward discarding or changing them. Barfield points out that the materialistic assumption affects not only present-day thinking but prejudices all conceptions of the past and of human origins. Causality is now, and always has been, scientists reason, "purely physical, untouched by 'transcendence'." This is the controlling meaning of the Cartesian outlook. He then says:

> . . . Darwinism, inculcated from childhood as fact, intertwines with, deepens and spreads the subliminal roots of Cartesianism. It is the combination of the two which has been decisive for the Western mindscape and is now almost synonymous with it.

Darwinist Blight

He continues, proposing that the restoration Roszak envisages will require what amounts to a heroic rejection of "the concept of an exclusively biological evolution, that is, of Darwinism; and it is just a fact that Darwinism is immanent in our mindscape at all points." The passage which follows seems particularly valuable for its insight into the decisive influence, at many levels, of "Darwinism"—by which Barfield means *"any* exclusively and mechanically biological theory of evolution." He writes:

> In order to convince oneself of that, it is only necessary to adopt for a few weeks the habit of reading and listening to contemporary literature and journalism in a rather special way. Pause every now and then and ask yourself: is one or other aspect of Darwinism (whether struggle for existence, sexual selection or the simple animality of man) implicit in that last observation or in the terminology it employs? You will not need to continue the experiment very long. Begin with Women's Liberation if you like. You will find three quarters or more of the arguments both for and against unquestioningly based on it. Or begin wherever you choose—child care, educational theory, environmentalism, ecology—and when you have done with sociology in all its branches, spread your net wider. You are likely to get a bigger haul from psychology; and the result will not be so very different with paleontology, anthropology, archeology, aesthetic theory, linguistics, and even philosophy as now generally taught. I have left out biology itself, with genetics,

> physiology, medicine etc. because in those cases the special attention I am suggesting is hardly necessary, the conclusion being obvious without it. Indeed the whole point is that it is not only biologists who (to borrow a phrase from George Steiner) "biologize the data," but that, either discursively or semantically or both, we are all doing it all the time.

"Psychic" Materialism

Are there, then, any "good signs"? Barfield cites evidence of growing differences with Darwinism by a minority in the life sciences—evidence largely unheard of by the man in the street—and sees dubious promise in certain phases of "psychic research." As to the latter, he calls the popular book, *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain,* "deplorably journalistic," although informing, then suggests that workers of this sort "are quite ready to abandon their materialism, provided they can maintain and even enhance technology by doing so." Again Mr. Barfield's comment is searching, since here, in effect, he distinguishes clearly between research suggestive of a higher nature in man and of a fellowship of life for both man and nature, and investigations which focus on expanding man's manipulative powers at the psychic level:

> Research into *psi* phenomena of all kinds, but particularly psycho-kinesis, far from being discredited as reactionary mysticism, is now being enthusiastically financed by the state. But the research is strictly technological and the aim is operational not cognitive. What matters is, not the nature and highest function of mental energy but the problem of quantifying it as manipulable "psychotrons." In this way it is incidentally disinfected of all philosophical and moral implications and the trauma of thermal dissolution may well be averted. If so, we should do well to reflect that the presence among us of a powerful impulse no longer to deny the spirit but to impound it, or rather no longer to doubt it but to deny it—to materialize as it were the immaterial itself, or in other words to turn from theoretical to practical reductionism, may be pregnant with the gravest possible consequences for mankind as a whole.

Another Synthesis

Barfield cites Roszak's hope that the motley collection of counter-cultural rebels and groups he calls The Human Potential Movement will eventually gain greater maturity and generate the moral energy required by truly constructive change. Mr. Roszak, in a "Reply" to Mr. Barfield, also printed in the *Denver Quarterly,* generally endorses his views, devoting his comment to an ampli-

fication of his own convictions concerning the goals and tasks which lie ahead. He feels that the restoration of "primitive" man's harmony and communion with nature must now be at another level—the level attained through deliberative self-consciousness after passing through the fires of an objectifying intellectuality and the cycle of an alienating science:

> What we must do is to recompose the old music of that worldview in a more universal mode than the tribal cultures can provide, in a style that does justice to our status as a planetary age. We need especially to find a way of expressing participation that comprehends the Western scientific experience, with its strange and fateful burden of alienation.

Old Traditions

This is followed by evaluation of new tendencies in theoretical physics, and the conclusion that "all the world's great traditions will add something of value to [a "symposium of the whole"], including many that have been long outcast." Then Mr. Roszak says:

> I have personally tended to pay greatest attention to the most shadowy and martyred of these traditions—the many occult movements of the western past: the mystery cults, magic rites, the Tarot, gnosticism, neoplatonism, hermeticism, alchemy. But my very loyalty to these much abused and misconceived traditions makes me painfully aware of how much mindless nonsense is bound to be swept into our symposium. There is indeed a lunatic fringe in every culture, where the desperation of unfulfilled spiritual needs drowns all capacity for metaphysical and moral judgment.

The Time's Great Need

Echoing Blake, Roszak says: "There is a single-visioned religiosity (superstition, properly called) just as there is a single-visioned rationality—and both, at their pathological extreme, lap over into the service of the demonic." These are modes of righteous self-indulgence and fanaticism, ending in "a compulsive fascination with power which subordinates knowledge to coercive know-how, and the consequent loss of all gentleness, tolerance, and imaginative plasticity." His concluding comment is this:

> Currently in America, the largest religious movement afoot is into the pentecostal congregations and the charismatic style of worship; it is a search for spiritual experience which too often becomes a sort of lumpen-mysticism that narrows rather than expands consciousness and allegiance. But the movement, like the more youthful fascination with psychedelic drugs and itin-

erant swamis, reveals the crying need of the times. Among the early converging crises of our day is the crisis of every authentically religious and occult group which had turned the necessity of its long-term isolation into an elitist virtue. And now here we are needing to democratize the mysteries without at the same time vulgarizing them, or we may see mankind's last great effort at spiritual regeneration collapse into invincible cynicism and despair.

Another Cyclic Return

An appropriate addition to these observations—which end on the note of brotherhood and help to all—would be to recall the injunction of many years ago by a Teacher of Theosophy, warning the students of that time to abandon their "elitism" and to follow the example of Gautama Buddha, who labored for all men. For Theosophy to fulfill its mission, that Teacher said, there must be "a more benevolent mingling of the high and the low." "The white race must be the first to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the dark nations, to call the poor despised 'nigger' brother." One who objects to this principle "is no Theosophist." Having provided an analysis of the human condition which in some ways is approached by both Mr. Barfield and Mr. Roszak, the writer of this letter said: "It is time that Theosophy should enter the arena." That time has very nearly come again.